

# **Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, September 17, 2013  
Council Chamber, 1 Clayport Street, Alnwick at 6.30pm

## **Present**

Martin Murphy, Transport topic lead  
Cllr John Taylor, Denwick Parish Council  
David Lovie, Alnwick Civic Society  
Susan Patience, Gallery Youth  
Rachael Roberts, Alnwick Friends of the Earth/Transition Alnwick  
Marc Johnson, Community Facilities topic lead

## **In Attendance**

Alan Hunter, English Heritage  
Chris Anderson, Planning Aid Northumberland County Council  
David Farrar, Alnwick Friends of the Earth/Transition Alnwick  
Peter Biggers, Project Coordinator  
Bill Batey, Alnwick Town Council  
David English, NCC  
Charlotte Colver, NCC (Notes)

## **1.0 Apologies**

Bill Grisdale, Mayor Alnwick Town Council (Chair)  
Sue Patience  
Philip Angier  
Kevin Bartlett, NCC

## **2.0 Minutes of Last Meeting**

- 2.1 The meaning of paragraph 5.9 was queried and it was agreed that Peter would submit an alternative.

## **3.0 Matters arising not on the agenda**

- 3.1 Referring to paragraph 4.4 Peter confirmed that, earlier the same day, he and Chris Anderson had met with NCC Officers to discuss the timetable for Planning Aid North support.

## **4.0 Locality Assistance Direct Support – Chris Anderson**

- 4.1 Chris explained that, through the successful bid to Locality for direct support from Planning Aid North, he will allocate a set number of hours to help the Steering Group draw up the plan and prepare it for pre-submission. In addition Chris will be calling on Planning Aid Volunteers with a full range of experience and relevant specialist skills, for example in relation to sustainability appraisal. Attached with these minutes is Chris' note from the meeting at County Hall earlier in the day, which set out an explanation of the support process and an outline timetable for the Steering Group to discuss. See Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Potential for a topic leads' workshop on site selection was discussed, perhaps on a Saturday in October from 9-1:30 to include visits to 3-4 sites and lunch to finish. The need for the plan drafting sessions to be run during October was also recognised.

- 4.3 Alan emphasised the need for the plan to achieve NPPF sustainability criteria in relation to social, economic and environmental issues including safeguarding the historic environment. To say for certain that the plan is sustainable, it must be demonstrated that objectives, policies and community action proposals: do not cause damage to the historic environment; are based on an understanding of heritage assets that might be affected; and are balanced with other issues. David L confirmed that, together with Alnwick Civic Society colleagues, he is taking this approach and he welcomed Chris and Alan's input.
- 4.4 It was pointed out that a Community Engagement Plan has been produced but Chris explained that Planning Aid could provide a 'health check' and help to refresh the plan up to examination.
- 4.5 It was agreed that draft policies and site assessments should be emerging at the same time as each other.
- 4.6 There was discussion about the concept and importance of the plan satisfying Basic Conditions and Chris explained that Planning Aid volunteers could provide a critical friend role in the sustainability assessment of drafts. While there is no legal requirement for Neighbourhood Plans to carry out a full Sustainability Appraisal (SA), the plan and its policies and action proposals need to be reviewed against sustainability criteria. It was noted that a good starting point is the NPPF 12 Core Planning Principles, (on page 5 of the NPPF), which are included in Appendix 2 to these minutes for convenience:

### Actions

- ❖ **Chris to send electronic copy of Planning Aid timetable note for Charlotte to attach with minutes.**
- ❖ **Peter and Chris to discuss and circulate dates for workshops and one to one meetings with topic leads.**

## **5.0 English Heritage support for Neighbourhood Planning – Alan Hunter**

- 5.2 Alan explained that English Heritage has a regulatory role in relation to Neighbourhood Planning but generally takes an 'arms' length' approach to the 'bottom up' process through web-based tool kits. However in refreshing their Key Plan for the north east, English Heritage has identified Northumberland as a priority for neighbourhood planning support and within that sees the special historic environment of Alnwick and Denwick as a high priority for support through the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.3 Alan listed a number of useful references and where possible web addresses have been included below for convenience:
- the National Heritage List for England <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england/>
  - English Heritage, Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/good-practice-local-heritage-listing/local-listing-guide.pdf>
  - The Historic Environment Local Management (HLM) web page <http://www.helm.org.uk/>
  - English Heritage Official Statistics <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/research/social-and-economic-research/official-statistics/>

- English Heritage Heritage at Risk Register <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/>
- A new English Heritage Guide to Heritage Protection to support the NPPF <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/hpg/>
- Northumberland County Council Historic Environment Record <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Default.aspx?page=615> (under Planning and Buildings / Archaeology)

5.4 Alan explained that it is important for the plan to ‘conserve’, ‘manage’ and ‘promote’ the historic environment and heritage assets, which can be used to regenerate the plan area, raising awareness and celebrating the special historic environment. He offered to act as a critical friend, citing particular experience with SAs. The potential impact of other topic’s policies on the historic environment was discussed as well as the particular position of the plan in relation to the emerging Northumberland Core Strategy. Chester West and Chester was cited as a similar case.

## 6.0 Drafting the plan

6.1 Peter has received a number of draft papers, which he is still discussing with relevant topic leads prior to circulation around the Steering Group. Progress on topics is summarised below:

- **Environment** – the topic is progressing well and an early draft has been discussed at a meeting on Friday with Peter and Charlotte and a cross-topic meeting with Bill B around environment and recreation. Charlotte provided base maps for Rachel to identify open spaces that she wishes Charlotte to determine hectareage for. There was some discussion about the potential for environment policy to allocate a designated ‘Local Green Space’ and it was agreed that the environment topic was the right place to do this if it is required. Charlotte can digitise any such area(s) that Rachel may wish to draw onto the maps provided. Charlotte has also agreed to provide a short paragraph on landscape character to allow policy to develop in coordination with the heritage topic. Rachel and David have had discussions with NCC County Ecologist David Feige about the potential for designating a Local Nature Reserve and is about to have discussions with Northumberland Wildlife Trust. David E confirmed that the specific Local Nature Reserve designation requires the relevant land to be owned by the Local Authority. (The maps Charlotte provided include NCC ownership as available to her from the County’s GIS but detailed information should be checked with NCC Assets Team.) The environment topic has also addressed Water (flooding and sustainable drainage); Waste, litter and recycling (in particular provision of new recycling points); and energy (including discussion with David L around micro-renewables on Listed Buildings and in the Conservation Area.) Finally there was discussion around the need to introduce agriculture but it was agreed that if relevant it would be dealt with under the employment topic and to a certain extent under heritage (in relation to views of Alnwick and Denwick and protection of historic field boundaries).
- **Sport and Leisure** – Bill B reported that the cross-topic meeting with Rachel and David F had been useful and that the chapter was progressing with a similar format to the environment chapter.
- **Heritage and Culture** – David L noted that he had useful discussions with Rachel and David F on micro-renewables and that there were further cross-

over areas including landscape character, trees and gateways, which require further discussion. Progress on the draft, using the range of experience of members of the Alnwick Civic Society, has been good, following a meeting with Alan Hunter, Peter and Charlotte, and a subsequent Civic Society meeting also attended by Alan. “Everyone has done their homework” and the rough draft, which has 21 policies and 16 proposals, is in a good state for editing and refining. Alan pointed out the distinction made in NPPF between policies and positive proactive strategies and suggested that the final Neighbourhood Plan could fill some of the gaps left by the absence of a Conservation Management Plan for Alnwick.

- **Education and community facilities** – Peter reported that Gordon, who had taken over the education section, was seeking further help from retired school teacher, Brian Lamb on this part of the Community Facilities chapter. It was noted that there had been some discussion about splitting the topic but the idea had been discounted. Marc dealing with community facilities, reported that further work is needed in relation to facilities for older people and he is working with Age Concern Northumberland on the issue. Mark is looking forward to working with Planning Aid on the drafting.
- **Transport** – Peter noted that he still had to go through Martin’s chapter and have further discussion with him.
- **Housing** – Peter is progressing the chapter and having on-going discussions with NCC around potential housing numbers in the emerging Core Strategy. Further progress is likely in mid-October when the next Core Strategy consultation documents on Housing and employment land become publically available. Discussions with NC include the possibility of agreeing a memorandum of agreement focused around housing and employment land figures to help ensure conformity with the Core Strategy.
- **Retail and town centre** – no update from topic lead, Philip Angier.
- **Tourism** – no progress at the moment and it is likely to be added into the economy chapter subject to discussion with economy topic lead, Colin Barnes.

6.2 The Steering Group agreed that they are generally happy with current time scales. In summarising the discussion Peter pointed out that the emerging proposals need to be ‘SMART’ i.e. Specific; Measurable; Attainable; Relevant; Time-bound. Topic leads need to be sure that it is clear how proposals will be delivered; who will be responsible; and ideally a time frame for delivery. However it was confirmed that the examination and referendum do not cover Community Action proposals.

### **Actions**

- ❖ **Topic leads to continue with draft chapters**
- ❖ **Charlotte to draft landscape character paragraph for environment chapter**

**7.0 Sustainability Appraisal** (This topic was addressed under item 4.0 above.)

### **8.0 Budget update**

Bill provided a budget provision statement. Expenditure to date has been £2,405.00 from the budget of £12,000.

Only a couple of payments had been made in the last month including fees to the Programme Coordinator. Bill confirmed that the Locality's Grant support of £6,390 was now available for draw down. A summary sheet explaining the grant is attached to these notes.

## **9.0 AOB**

- 9.1 Sue made a request, and it was agreed, that a small part of the Town Council's budget should be allocated to providing hot drinks, water and biscuits for the Steering Group meetings, which most people attend directly from work without the opportunity for a break.
- 9.2 Sue raised the issue that the NCC Housing Service is being moved out of Clayport Street and that it is not clear what arrangements are in place, or who to contact, to ensure the building is comfortable for users, e.g. heating turned on in time for meetings.

### **Actions**

- ❖ **Bill B to organise provision of refreshments and check arrangements and contacts for management of the facility in future.**

## **10.0 Dates of next meetings – please put confirmed dates in your diaries**

Next meetings will be held as agreed on the **third Tuesday of each month** at the Council Chamber, Alnwick on:

- Tuesday, **October 15**, 2013 at 6:30pm
- Tuesday, **November 19**, 2013 at 6:30pm
- Tuesday, **December 17**, 2013 at 6:30pm

In addition a number of Planning Aid supported meetings and workshops are to be arranged and confirmed for September and October.

## Appendix 1 - Inception Meeting for the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan -17.09.13

### County Hall - Morpeth

#### Present

Peter Biggers, Jonathan Nicholson, Charlotte Clover, Chris Anderson, David English, Student Support Planners x2

#### Notes

	Summary of planned activities expected from the support	Days
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Specialist Planning Support</b>	
	Support with developing a methodology for site selection	2.5
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Consultation Events and Activities</b>	
	Support and advice with the production and delivery of a community engagement plan leading up to pre-submission consultation	3.5
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Plan Development and Writing</b>	
	Review and advise on the initial draft policies and the evidence supporting them. Review and advise on the draft Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents	4.5

#### **Support with developing a methodology for site selection**

- The NP process has not offered the chance to get involved in the development of policy and site selection to any great extent. There was a discussion workshop held in June to discuss what some options may look like on the ground.
- The group need to record a methodology for selecting sites and assessing them in relation to their availability, deliverability, suitability, viability.
- Morpeth NP has developed site selection criteria for their sites which may be a starting point of reference rather than re-invent the wheel.

Planning Aid England (PAE) could offer a workshop style activity that would involve looking at site assessment and the importance of why it is needed in the NP. The workshop would focus more on developing a methodology for assessing sites in Alnwick and Denwick and offer good practice ideas from around the country. The second part of the workshop would involve going out with our draft model for assessing sites and having a go with PAE volunteers at some of the sites identified so far in the area. Other interested parties could be invited to come out and be involved in the site assessment i.e. Northumbrian Water

#### **When? – A Saturday morning activity 9.30am-1.30pm in late Sept/early Oct**

PAE (Chris Anderson) will put together a draft programme for the activity

#### **Support and advice with the production and delivery of a community engagement plan leading up to pre-submission consultation**

- The community consultation group have an engagement plan done that takes in all of the stages
- The engagement plan could be looked at from a refresh point of view, looking at the

specific elements required at examination stage to check the community engagement is collecting everything it is required to do in a variety of formats to help influence the consultation statement that will be needed as part of submitting a draft plan.

- Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan in Cheshire and its community engagement in particular was highlighted as good practice by the examiner for reference (referendum 24 Oct)

PAE would be able to meet the community engagement subgroup to help develop the ADNP strategy toward pre-submission and work out a way of providing volunteer support at this initial session looking at where we are so far with our community engagement and where we need to go next.

#### **When? – September Meeting with the Community Engagement subgroup**

**Review and advice on the initial draft policies and the evidence supporting them.**

**Review and advice on the draft Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents.**

- There have already been 2 sessions held with Dave Chetwyn and Mick Downs to look at the theory of policy writing and good practice.
- The next stages would be for groups to consider “what” their policy wants to do in the whole and begin to section the aims of the policy into planning policy and non – planning criteria with a view to arriving at a draft policy

#### **What will the policy do?**

#### **Policy?**

#### **Non-Planning proposals**

PAE would be able to provide support around this type of exercise as an exercise with topic leads to aim to get to a draft policy as part of the exercise. There would also be a part of PAE support to find a volunteer that could act as a “critical friend” as the draft policy develops to comment and offer an independent and impartial view on the ADNP Policies.

#### **When? It would be sensible to do this work in conjunction with the site assessment support in Oct**

As part of PAEs support to advise on the draft Neighbourhood Plan it would become apparent to support the group on meeting the basic conditions and making sure the draft plan was in accordance with the criteria set out in the Basic Conditions. One of these criteria is that the plan contributes toward sustainability and, while there is no obligation to prepare a full Sustainability Appraisal as is done with other planning documents, all Neighbourhood Plans seem to be taking the approach to review their policies against certain criteria to show in their basic conditions statement that the plan does contribute toward sustainability. PAE have recently supported the Allendale NP in this process and it would be sensible that the ADNP learned of this approach and adapted it to their policies with the support of PAE

**When? Introducing sustainability reviews would be timely to do once the ADNP policies are at a draft stage. Following this the review itself could be undertaken with support from PAE.**

**Late Nov/early Dec**

## Appendix 2 - NPPF Core Planning Principles

### Core planning principles

17. Within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. These 12 principles are that planning should:

- be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area. Plans should be kept up-to-date, and be based on joint working and co-operation to address larger than local issues. They should provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency;
- not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
- proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Plans should take account of market signals, such as land prices and housing affordability, and set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development in their area, taking account of the needs of the residential and business communities;
- always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;
- support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy);
- contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;
- encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value;
- promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production);
- conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;
- actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable; and
- take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.